DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 475 721 HE 035 820

TITLE	Purposes, Policies, Performance: Higher Education and the Fulfillment of a State's Public Agenda. National Center Report.
INSTITUTION	National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, CA.
REPORT NO	R-03-1
PUB DATE	2003-02-00
NOTE	39p.
AVAILABLE FROM	National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 152 North Third Street, Suite 705, San Jose, CA 95112. Tel: 408-271-2697; Fax: 408-271-2697; e-mail: center@highereducation.org. For full text: http://www.highereducation.org.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Proceedings (021) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Academic Achievement; Comparative Analysis; Educational Objectives; *Educational Policy; *Higher Education; *Report Cards; State Action

ABSTRACT

This essay is based on a roundtable of higher education leaders and policy officials convened in June 2002 as part of a larger research effort undertaken by the Alliance for International Higher Education Policy Studies (AIHEPS), an international collaboration for comparative research on higher education policy. The roundtable focused on AIHEPS research that examined the policy environments in two states, New Jersey and New Mexico. Through an extensive series of interviews with state policy officials and with data collection and analyses from many sources, AIHEPS researchers examined the relationship between the higher education policy environment and the grades these states attained on the report card measures of "Measuring Up 2000." The roundtable examined this research and identified key questions a state should ask as it seeks to improve the performance of its higher education institutions in advancing public priorities. The roundtable also proposed recommendations to help a state that wishes to improve its performance in achieving public purposes through its system of higher education. The insights of the AIHEPS project argue against the view that "market forces" in themselves will ensure that higher education institutions work effectively to fulfill a state's public objectives. States have an obligation not only to fund their systems of higher education adequately, but also to provide an explicit policy framework that informs and guides the actions of individual colleges and universities. Appendixes discuss the importance of mission differentiation, achieving the public agenda for higher education, and the role of the federal government. (SLD)

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HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE FULFILLMENT OF A STATE'S PUBLIC AGENDA

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February 2003

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Purposes, Policies, Performance

Higher Education and the Fulfillment of a State's Public Agenda

February 2003

The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education

This essay is drawn from discussions among higher education leaders and policy officials at a roundtable convened in June 2002 at New Jersey City University as part of a research effort undertaken by the Alliance for International Higher Education Policy Studies (AIHEPS).

National Center Report #03-1

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Acknowledgments

This essay is based on a roundtable of higher education leaders and policy officials convened in June 2002 at New Jersey City University as part of a larger research effort undertaken by the Alliance for International Higher Education Policy Studies (AIHEPS). A collaboration between New York University, the Autonomous University of Puebla, and the University of British Columbia, AIHEPS is funded by the Ford Foundation to undertake comparative research in Mexico, the United States, and Canada on the nature of higher education policy in the broadest sense, and the impact that a given policy environment has on higher education performance. The roundtable was convened to test propositions from an initial study of state policy environments in the United States conducted by AIHEPS researchers Richard C. Richardson, Jr., of New York University and Mario C. Martinez of New Mexico State University. The roundtable was facilitated by Patrick M. Callan, president of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. Gregory R. Wegner of the Knight Collaborative drafted the essay based on the roundtable discussion.

The following individuals served as participants in the roundtable and helped to shape the essay's central themes.

Jorge Balán
Program Officer
The Ford Foundation

Frank Bird
Commissioner
New Mexico Commission on Higher Education

Stephen R. Briggs
Provost
College of New Jersey

Patrick M. Callan
President
National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education

Pete Campos
Senator
New Mexico Senate

Paul Christensen
Vice Chairman
New Mexico Commission on Higher Education

Lara K. Couturier
Associate Director
The Futures Project
Brown University

Glen W. Davidson
Director of Educational Programs
New Mexico Commission on Higher Education

Joseph V. Doria, Jr.
Mayor of Bayonne
Assemblyman, 31st District of New Jersey
New Jersey Assembly

Cathy T. Fernandez
Principal Analyst, Higher Education
New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee

Donald Fisher
Professor of Educational Studies
Co-Director
Centre for Policy Studies in Higher Education and Training
University of British Columbia

Brian L. Foster
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
University of New Mexico

Darryl G. Greer
Executive Director
New Jersey Association of State Colleges and Universities

Pauline K. Gubbels
Representative
New Mexico House of Representatives
New Mexico Commissioner
Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

Bruce Hamlett
Executive Director
New Mexico Commission on Higher Education

Carlos Hernandez
President
New Jersey City University

Alicia D. Hurley
Director of Federal Policy
New York University

Liz Jenkins
Deputy Director
New Mexico Commission on Higher Education

Rollin Kent
Professor, Faculty of Administration
Associate Director
Alliance for International Higher Education Policy Studies
Autonomous University of Puebla, Mexico

David A. Lepre
Executive Director
New Mexico Council of University Presidents

Paul E. Lingenfelter
Executive Director
State Higher Education Executive Officers

David A. Longanecker
Executive Director
Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

Francisco Marmolejo
Executive Director
Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration

Mario C. Martinez
Assistant Professor, Educational Management
Senior Research Analyst
Alliance for International Higher Education Policy Studies
New Mexico State University

Elias Narciso Matos
Assistant Professor
Pedagogical University
Mozambique

Steve McCleery
President
New Mexico Junior College

Teboho Moja
Professor
Department of Administration, Leadership, and Technology
Steinhardt School of Education
New York University

Jeanne Oswald
Deputy Executive Director
New Jersey Commission on Higher Education

Anne Prisco
Associate Provost and Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Management
Lehman College/City University of New York

Frank Renz
Executive Director
New Mexico Association of Community Colleges

Richard C. Richardson, Jr.
Professor of Higher Education
Director
Alliance for International Higher Education Policy Studies
New York University

Kjell Rubenson
Professor of Education
Co-Director
Centre for Policy Studies in Higher Education and Training
University of British Columbia

James E. Sulton, Jr.
Executive Director
New Jersey Commission on Higher Education

Wietse de Vries
Associate Researcher
Alliance for International Higher Education Policy Studies
Autonomous University of Puebla, Mexico

Gregory R. Wegner
Senior Associate
Knight Collaborative

John Wilson
President
Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of New Jersey

Introduction

In the United States, the primary responsibility for education lies with individual states. To be sure, the federal government plays an enabling role, particularly in higher education; its programs of financial aid and assistance create opportunity for millions of Americans, helping ensure that those who seek a higher education can do so regardless of their financial circumstance. But it is states that create the particular environment for education, not just in the primary and secondary levels but also in the domain of higher education. Through its system of public and private colleges and universities, each state plays a major role in determining the kinds of educational opportunities available to its residents.

In the course of two centuries, and particularly within the past 50 years, both the federal and state governments in the United States have invested substantially in higher education from a conviction that such investment serves the public interest while helping fulfill the individual aspirations of those who enroll. The enactment of the G.I. Bill after World War II and the passage of the Higher Education Amendments of 1972 were notable instances of the federal government's commitment to ensuring that financial limitations would not become an obstacle to students who sought to pursue educational opportunity beyond high school. From the 1950s through the 1970s, every state invested heavily in building capacity to meet a growing demand for postsecondary education; this commitment led to the founding of hundreds of community colleges as well as a substantial growth in the number and size of public four-year colleges and universities. Then as now, the underlying theme of these public investments has been that education matters, and that success in K–12 and higher education is critically important both to individual advancement and to strengthening the fabric of society.

No two states are alike in meeting their obligation to educate their residents for lives of productive engagement with society.

No two states are alike, however, in meeting their obligation to educate their residents for lives of productive engagement with society. Like the layout of streets and roads, the map of higher education in a state is often a function of histories and cultures extending well beyond living memory. The decisions reached in a particular state environment often have as much to do with personality and local politics as with any ideal conception of policy and its impact. Given the variety that exists among states, the United States offers a richly textured setting for examining the relationship between higher education policy and the educational results that different states achieve.

This paper proposes a set of key questions and recommendations to higher education policymakers as well as college and university leaders.

This essay derives from a roundtable of higher education leaders and policy officials convened in June 2002 at New Jersey City University as part of a larger research effort undertaken by the Alliance for International Higher Education Policy Studies (AIHEPS). A collaboration between New York University, the Autonomous University of Puebla, and the University of British Columbia, AIHEPS is funded by the Ford Foundation to undertake comparative research in Mexico, the United States, and Canada on the nature of higher education policy in the broadest sense, and the impact that a given policy environment has on higher education performance. On the basis of the AIHEPS research and the deliberations of the roundtable convened to test initial findings of that research in the United States, this paper proposes a set of key questions and recommendations to higher education policymakers as well as college and university leaders. We believe the issues outlined in these pages need to engage the attention of these leaders as they work to improve the effectiveness of higher education in their own settings.

The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education has developed a promising set of criteria for gauging the performance of higher education in individual states in *Measuring Up 2000: The State-by-State Report Card for Higher Education*.[1] *Measuring Up* constitutes a first attempt to compare the performance of higher education in all 50 states on a range of criteria in five broad categories: preparation for higher education; affordability; participation; completion; and the benefits that higher education confers to individuals and the state in general. While the performance measures it applies may not align in every respect with those that individual states devise, *Measuring Up* nonetheless provides a useful analytic means of comparing the results different states achieve using a common set of metrics. As such, the report card provides an important set of tools for testing key elements of the AIHEPS research.

Our roundtable focused on one component of the AIHEPS research that examined the policy environments in two states in the United States: New Jersey and New Mexico. Through an extensive series of interviews with state

[1] Both the AIHEPS research project and the roundtable to discuss its findings took place before the release of *Measuring Up 2002*, an updated edition of *Measuring Up 2000*. This paper does not address changes that might have occurred in the two states since the initial AIHEPS research or the grades that the states received in *Measuring Up 2002*.

policy officials as well as data collection and analysis, AIHEPS researchers Richard C. Richardson, Jr. and Mario C. Martinez examined the relationship between the higher education policy environment and the grades these two states attained on the report card's measures. The purpose of the roundtable was to test and refine key insights that the AIHEPS research has yielded thus far. The participants in our roundtable included policymakers and institutional leaders from both New Jersey and New Mexico. Also included were several participants who brought experience and insight into the working of higher education policy in a variety of settings in the United States and other nations.[2]

[2] This paper does not provide a detailed description of the AIHEPS research itself, its methods, or its conceptual model. It does not provide comprehensive portraits of the policy environments of New Jersey or New Mexico or attempt a complete analysis of particular differences in their performance as reported by *Measuring Up 2000*. For a full accounting of these matters, consult the AIHEPS research publications, all of which can be accessed and downloaded from http://www.nyu.edu/iesp/aiheps/. In particular, *New Jersey and New Mexico: Explaining Differences in the Performance of Higher Education Systems* provides a synthesis of the AIHEPS research findings on the comparative study of New Jersey and New Mexico.

Points of Comparison

Any discussion of the dynamic of higher education in a given state environment entails a consideration of several factors. The policy environment results from a unique combination of forces, including the amount of power the governor and Legislature have in determining higher education policy; whether or not public universities enjoy constitutional status; the values implicit in the political culture (including the degree to which a state's leaders make higher education a priority in the policy agenda); and the demographic and economic circumstances of a state.

There are particular sets of variables in each state that collectively make up the "rules of the game."

Beyond these general determinants, there are particular sets of variables in each state that collectively make up the "rules of the game." These rules fall into two major categories:

- *State System Design* includes the number and type of service providers; the missions assigned to each; the characteristics and powers of agencies in the interface between government and providers; the information systems that collect, organize, and report data essential to understanding and influencing performance; available technology and its uses; and the role assigned to the private sector.
- *State Fiscal Policy* includes the amount of operating support and the regulations that apply to its distribution; institutional autonomy in determining capital needs and in securing funding; the amount and use of incentive funding; the types and amount of student assistance; and tax policy.

These rules of the game, in conjunction with the general features of a state policy environment, ultimately affect the behaviors of a higher education system within a state: the kinds of leadership that higher education institutions attract and support; the degree of communication and collaboration that occurs among a state's colleges and universities; and the degree to which institutions are held accountable for meeting state policy objectives for higher education.

In addition, each of these elements plays a role in shaping the educational policies that emerge within any state, helping define the kinds of priorities that colleges and universities pursue and the extent to which those priorities align with a state's purposes in supporting its higher education system. Collectively, these dynamics have a significant impact not only on the efficiency of a state's investment in higher education, but also on a state's educational performance.

On the basis of this AIHEPS research, as well as our own experience in many other settings, we assert that (1) the more explicitly a given state defines the purposes it seeks to achieve in supporting its higher education system, (2) the more clearly it conveys those expectations to institutions through the rules of the game, and (3) the more care and discernment it gives to the work of assessing how well its purposes are achieved, the more likely that state is to achieve optimal performance on the measures of preparation, affordability, participation, completion, and benefits, as defined by the *Measuring Up* report card series.

Posing the Questions

While our roundtable considered differences between two states as points of departure, we believe the principles identified in our exchanges apply to other state environments as well. In fact, a major objective of this paper is to encourage other states to consider these questions in light of their own policies and performance. These are the key questions our roundtable participants suggested that any state should ask as it seeks to improve the performance of its higher education institutions in advancing public priorities.

A major objective of this paper is to encourage other states to consider these questions in light of their own policies and performance.

1. To what extent has a state defined the public purposes it expects higher education institutions to help accomplish? Are the purposes a state seeks to achieve through its colleges and universities clearly articulated? Do institutional leaders and policymakers share a common understanding of those purposes?

A first step for any state that seeks to improve the performance of its higher education system is to pose and publicly debate a core set of questions concerning that system: What is the rationale that justifies a state's spending for institutional appropriation, capital construction, or financial aid? Is that rationale clearly defined? Is it consciously examined, debated, and reaffirmed at regular intervals in the arenas of public policy? Or have the arguments that justify a state's expenditures for higher education become vestiges of a distant past, subject to differing memories and interpretations?

A state needs the political will to set the public agenda—to formulate clear definitions of the public purposes it expects higher education institutions to help attain. As the needs of society itself evolve, the ends a state seeks to achieve through its colleges and universities can also change. For this reason, the question of higher education's role in advancing the public weal needs to be revisited periodically. At the same time, a state needs to assess how well the policies and programs currently in place actually achieve their intended goals. In the absence of such periodic reviews, states tend to increase their expectations of higher education institutions—to add new expectations—without considering how the new expectations relate to those in place from an earlier time.

States must also work to maintain a balance between the evolution of their own public purposes on the one hand and the evolution of institutional goals

on the other. A state that allows unspoken and implicit priorities to prevail over principles that are publicly debated and affirmed effectively accords more autonomy to institutions in pursuing their own directions. Ultimately, states that do not articulate their purposes may find themselves maintaining institutions for reasons that are increasingly vague and ambiguous.

A state that allows unspoken and implicit priorities to prevail over principles that are publicly debated and affirmed effectively accords more autonomy to institutions in pursuing their own directions.

2. How well do a state's fiscal appropriation practices align with the mandates of its higher education policies? What combination of policy mandate and incentives is most effective in motivating institutions toward the achievement of public purposes?

Providing a rationale and framework for supporting higher education institutions is half the task confronting state policymakers. Through a combination of statutory authority and resource allocation, a state must work to ensure that institutions fulfill the public purposes its policymakers have identified.

The authority of educational policy derives from the constitutional power of a state's elected representatives. While respecting the operational flexibility of higher education institutions, these officials help determine institutional priorities by establishing state policies. Beyond the mandate of policy, however, a state must be willing to appropriate the resources needed to achieve given purposes. A state's budgetary appropriation to institutions is a most telling statement of public policy with regard to higher education; by the amount and the kind of funding it provides, a state sends an explicit or implicit signal about its priorities for higher education. For reasons beyond its control, a state may sometimes fail to provide sufficient funding for institutions to carry out its public purposes to the extent or at the level of quality it desires. While unforeseen shortfalls in the budget are inevitable in some years, a state that systematically underfunds its higher education system loses some ability to influence institutions in terms of quality or direction. Ultimately, a state and its higher education system need to define what constitutes a reasonable exchange of product for price.

While some institutions prefer formula-driven or incremental increases in the funding they receive, public officials have occasionally sought to link a portion of an institution's funding to the achievement of a particular objective, such as enrollment, retention, or degree completion. A state must exercise caution to ensure that the funding incentives it establishes in fact motivate the behaviors it desires in institutions.

The international perspective of our roundtable provided a telling example of the need for policymakers to ensure that the fulfillment of a public purpose falls within the interests of institutions themselves. South Africa, until recently, used the technique of penalizing institutions whose students did not achieve acceptable levels of performance. Rather than spurring institutions to foster heightened achievement in their existing student bodies, this policy often caused higher education institutions to seek higher-achieving students in order to avoid incurring penalty, in effect heightening the barriers to access for many students. The country is now finalizing a new funding system with incentives to institutions that improve the performance of lower-achieving students.

Fiscal strategy is not the only means by which a state can influence institutional behavior. If designed carefully, with an awareness of what motivates institutions, however, the alignment of funding with the achievement of public purposes can be an effective means of improving a state's higher education performance.

3. To what extent do a state's tuition and financial aid policies contribute to increased higher education participation and completion?

The amount of tuition charged at public institutions, in addition to state programs of financial aid and assistance, are central elements of a state's fiscal policy. It sometimes occurs that a state's public officials have not formulated an explicit policy regarding tuition, and in such instances, the very lack of specificity constitutes a policy decision. A primary lesson from the AIHEPS research and from experience in many other settings is the importance of need-based programs of financial aid and assistance to foster higher education participation and completion among the most needy. Financial aid is the area in which a state's higher education policy intersects most substantially with federal programs; the kinds of financial aid a state makes available in conjunction with Pell Grants and other federal aid programs define the contours of affordability for students in that setting.

Both New Jersey and New Mexico exemplify a strong commitment to access, and both take substantial steps to ensure that financial need does not become a barrier to enrolling and completing a degree program in a college or university. In addition to its need-based programs of financial aid, New Mexico's commitment to access results in a remarkably low tuition at the state's public institutions of higher education. The experience of many state policy environments makes clear, however, that low tuition in itself does not guarantee

Need-based financial aid is a critical element for any state that seeks to enhance the participation of students who have limited financial means.

access for students. Particularly in sparsely populated settings, where higher education institutions may be a considerable distance from a student's home, the decision to attend college entails a number of financial commitments that low tuition in itself cannot help a student to meet. Need-based financial aid is a critical element for any state that seeks to enhance the participation of students who have limited financial means.

One of the most notable developments during the past several years is the growth in programs that award aid on the basis of academic merit without regard for financial need. Georgia's merit-based program of financial aid, Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally (HOPE), has proven to be a model for similar programs in other states. In New Mexico, the merit-based Lottery Success Scholarship Program has become enormously popular with voters, policymakers, and institutions alike. As with many other aspects of public policy, merit-based programs of financial aid tend to provide greatest benefit to members of the middle class. No elected public official can fail to perceive the political benefit of programs that are popular with the largest block of voters in a state.

Merit-based aid programs exemplify a different policy objective from that of providing financial assistance to the most needy. A state's motivation in providing such aid is to encourage more of its highest-achieving students to remain in the state—first by enrolling in its higher education institutions, and then, ideally, by choosing to live and work in the state after graduation, thus enhancing a state's educational capital. Merit-based programs have certainly succeeded in attracting more of the highest-achieving students to pursue their baccalaureate degrees in their home state; in doing so, they have relieved many high-achieving, mostly middle-class students and their parents of substantial costs they might otherwise have incurred in attending institutions out of state. Students of this type tend to have considerable mobility after graduation, however, and it is less clear whether merit-based programs encourage more of them to remain in a state after completing their degrees.

Much of the controversy centers on the question of whether a state's investment in merit-based financial aid occurs at the expense of its commitment to need-based aid. Most of those states that have invested in merit-based programs of aid during the past several years did not have strong historical commitments to need-based aid. In those cases, the introduction of merit-based aid has done no harm to students with greater financial need; in fact, some needy students have benefited because they qualify for the merit-based programs. In states that have begun to blend merit-based with need-based

commitments, however, it often appears that the appeal of merit aid has diminished the perception of importance attached to need-based programs.

Beyond the obvious political popularity of merit-based aid, a state must ask whether such programs yield a long-term benefit of encouraging more of the best and brightest to remain in the state as workers and citizens. If the answer is no, the question then becomes whether the dollars expended in merit-based programs might be more effectively spent enhancing programs that enable more of those with greatest financial need to attend college.

4. What role does the state interface agency—typically either a higher education governing or coordinating board—play to ensure that a state's higher education institutions contribute effectively to the achievement of public purposes? To what extent is institutional mission a factor in determining the responsibilities of institutions in fulfilling public purposes?

Nearly every state in the United States has one or more agencies that serve as intermediaries between a state's lawmakers and its higher education institutions. The level of authority vested in a state interface agency varies: some states have a governing board with regulatory authority over public institutions, others a coordinating board that serves in primarily steering and oversight capacities. The notable exception to this rule is the four-year sector in Michigan, which has no formal interface agency. Michigan's public universities rely on a council of presidents to achieve a unified approach in dealing with the state's lawmakers. While presidents of four-year universities stand in accord on many issues, each institution appeals individually to the Legislature and governor in the state's budget process, and the amount of funding each institution receives is a direct function of its historical allocation, modestly adjusted by lobbying efforts.

A state higher education interface agency can help reduce the inherent competition among public colleges and universities. In addition, an effective governing or coordinating board can play a vital role in making a state's system of higher education more efficient, more successful, and more accountable in terms of educational performance.

The interface agency itself must be accountable both to the public purposes a state has defined and to the needs of higher education institutions within the system it serves. An effective interface agency can encourage collaboration among institutions; it can work in behalf of all colleges and universities to

influence state government; and it can gather and provide information that documents changes in performance.

One of the key roles a governing or coordinating board plays is that of providing information that influences decision making both in state government and in individual institutions. The information disseminated by an interface agency can contribute substantially to the effectiveness of the state's higher education system, helping to sustain the interest of institutional leaders and policymakers in performance. The periodic distribution of comparative data helps sharpen and renew public officials' understanding of the purposes a state seeks to achieve through its higher education institutions, while also reminding institutional leaders of the criteria that measure an institution's performance.

Indeed, the international perspective of the AIHEPS project makes clear that the presence or absence of information in a given environment is itself a policy issue. One of the major differences between higher education environments in the United States and Mexico is the availability of information for evaluative or strategic purposes. In Mexico, the scarcity of information and the fact that most data are controlled by institutions often impede the work of improving the performance of higher education systems.

While the gathering and distribution of information are important functions of an interface agency, these roles in themselves will not ensure improvement in the performance of a state's higher education system. An interface agency cannot be effective if it is a political weakling; it needs some measure of authority to motivate the behavior of institutions toward desired ends, whether in the form of incentives or simply the consistent support of sensible decisions by the governor and Legislature. Certainly, the amount of resources available to an interface agency is an important part of the equation; no statewide board can hope to be effective if it lacks sufficient funding and staff. Ideally, the effectiveness of an interface agency rests on its power to influence elected policymakers and to craft policies and incentives that make the achievement of a state's policy goals fall within the self-interest of institutions themselves.

The interface agency often plays a central role in devising appropriate measures of institutional accountability that help to ensure compliance with a state's policy objectives for higher education. Even though expenditures for higher education now constitute a smaller share of state budgets, state support of higher education has grown in real dollars during the past two decades, and public officials naturally seek to ensure that the dollars invested yield

discernible results. In some settings, a state's drive for institutional accountability has led to confrontations over such matters as faculty productivity or the assessment of student learning. The interface agency plays a critical role in any successful effort to conjoin public officials' press for accountability with higher education's traditions of autonomy in the means of fulfilling its educational mission. An interface agency can help create accountability measures that provide a meaningful index of progress in meeting a state's goals for higher education. It can also ensure that credible reports of performance reach legislators and the general public on a timely basis.

A state governing or coordinating board is by definition an agency that provides both support of and guidance to institutions as they pursue their individual strategic goals. Governing boards of individual colleges and universities can easily become captives of an institution's own ambitions, advocating those particular interests even at the expense of achieving broader state policy objectives. While affording institutions some measure of protection from the fluctuations of state politics, the interface agency helps ensure that individual institutions evolve in directions that are consistent with state policy goals.

One of the issues an interface agency can help address is the degree to which institutional mission should be a factor in the question of accountability to a state's public purposes. Successful degree completion, for example, is a goal that has meaning to every higher education institution. But should every institution be held equally accountable to a single graduation rate? Because institutions with different missions may serve different kinds of student populations, holding every institution equally accountable to a particular measure may prove neither efficient nor desirable. At the same time, institutional mission can easily come to reflect an institution's aspiration to grow in directions that do not meet the greatest public need. Just as a state's expectations of higher education change over time, mission often becomes a moving target, changing to accommodate the institution's internally driven goals—such as implementing more selective undergraduate admissions, establishing graduate programs, or expanding sponsored research programs—even if those purposes are fulfilled elsewhere in a state's higher education system.

Institutional mission can easily come to reflect an institution's aspiration to grow in directions that do not meet the greatest public need.

The interface agency plays a critical role in facilitating a sustained interaction between a state's policymakers and its higher education institutions. In so doing, it helps ensure the continued strength and adaptability of policies to which all institutions are held accountable. No higher education institution

that benefits from public funding should get an automatic "pass" on its obligation to help fulfill the public agenda, but a state should not expect every institution to achieve particular purposes in the same way. Finally, it is fitting that a state should seek to hold institutions accountable for the "what" but certainly not the "how" of achieving public purposes.

5. What steps has a state taken to build the infrastructure and encourage higher education institutions to collaborate—with one another, with K–12 schools, with business and industry—in order to foster the goal of improved preparation as well as economic development?

State policymakers play a key role in creating an environment that fosters collaboration between higher education institutions and other agents in areas that effect economic and civic vitality. As major stakeholders, colleges and universities contribute to and depend on the educational and economic well-being of a state's population. The development of more concerted partnerships between these institutions and K–12 schools is a key element in improving students' preparation for higher education study—and ultimately in increasing the number of students who pursue postsecondary education. By the same token, higher education's partnerships with business and industry can contribute substantially to the benefits that a higher education confers.

A state's most promising strategy in fostering collaboration is to create a framework and statewide incentives that help coordinate local initiatives.

States in attractive geographic locations with fair climates can reap an educational and economic advantage simply because they draw many of the best and brightest from other settings. States that do not enjoy this advantage, however, must develop strategies to encourage higher education institutions to work with schools and other agencies, helping to maximize both college participation and the economic benefits higher education provides to a state's population. Colleges and universities have the capacity to improve both measures by working in conjunction with a state's primary and secondary schools as their principal supplier of students, as well as with business leaders, who employ substantial numbers of their graduates.

A state's most promising strategy in fostering collaboration is to create a framework and statewide incentives that help coordinate local initiatives. In this, as in other dimensions of achieving a state's public purposes, the levers of policy can help make collaboration with other stakeholders seem to be in the best interests of higher education institutions themselves. Part of a state's challenge in promoting collaboration between higher education and K–12 institutions is to overcome substantial cultural barriers that exist between the

two domains. Finally, the incentives a state creates for increased collaboration must be built on both sides, so that public schools and higher education institutions find their own interests served by working together.

States must create conditions that make it compelling for higher education institutions to work with K–12 schools.

In general, it is community colleges as well as comprehensive universities with strong commitments to training teachers that are most highly attuned to the challenges of K–12 schools, and to the evolving set of skills that business and industry leaders seek in their workforce. It is also true that the more numerous the expectations a state places on its higher education institutions, the easier it becomes for institutions to escape responsibility for those goals they find less conducive to their own ambitions. States must create conditions that make it compelling for higher education institutions to work with K–12 schools in improving students' preparation for college. Equally important is a state's role in fostering institutional partnerships with business and industry to help maximize the benefits that higher education confers to a state's residents. If institutions choose not to participate in the achievement of such purposes, states must devise means of encouraging compliance. A state that lacks the means or the will to define and pursue its public priorities effectively accords its public institutions open license to pursue goals of their own choosing, with minimal regard to a state's public purposes.

From Principles to Action

Ultimately, a state must do more than simply ask itself the questions we have identified above; it must work to create the environment that allows its educational performance to improve. The recommendations we pose are important steps in the right direction for a state that wishes to improve its performance in achieving public purposes through its system of higher education.

Every state has a fundamental obligation to define clearly, through a process of public debate and affirmation, the purposes it expects higher education to achieve.

State government has a responsibility to identify areas of performance where improvement is a public priority. Failure to identify state priorities constitutes a shirking of that responsibility and implicit acceptance of institutional priorities, which may or may not encompass public concerns.

A state must also establish and support statewide systems that facilitate higher education's fulfillment of the public purposes a state has defined.

States that use well-defined priorities to steer their higher education systems increase their chances of achieving performance levels that satisfy elected leaders and reflect the needs of all citizens. States that have designed a rational system of comprehensive and diverse higher education institutions (including the independent sector) will be more cost-effective than those with systems that have evolved over time primarily in response to institutional aspirations.

A state must conjoin its funding of higher education institutions with the purposes it expects those institutions to help achieve, balancing mandates with incentives to bring into alignment a state's public interests with the interests of institutions.

The "rules of the game," which reflect a state's fiscal policy and the design of its educational system, influence institutional actions and priorities. Changing the rules will change performance over time. Performance can be

improved by systemic and fiscal strategies that use an appropriate balance of regulating and steering to promote attention to public priorities.

In high-performing states, fiscal policies reward institutions for improved performance on participation, completion, and other public priorities.

States that seek to encourage participation by a range of students, including those with limited financial means, must establish appropriate tuition guidelines and programs of financial aid.

State financial aid, tuition, and appropriation policies have a major impact on higher education participation and completion within the state. States can achieve affordable systems either through high-tuition or low-tuition strategies, but high-performing states will offer significant student aid. In the absence of adequate need-based aid, low tuition alone will not create optimal participation levels. In the presence of high tuition, the participation of students who are ineligible for assistance will be inhibited.

States must ensure that a statewide interface agency has sufficient independence from state government and sufficient authority over institutions to implement systemwide approaches to improving the performance of higher education.

State capacity to change the rules of the game in ways that build institutional responsiveness to public priorities is enhanced by an interface agency that is dominated neither by state government nor institutions and that is able to craft and coordinate systemwide strategies without controlling or dominating implementation.

States must gather and disseminate information about performance on measures they have identified as important to a state's public purposes.

Effective interface agencies have their own data collection and analysis capabilities and prepare independent reports and policy recommendations. Information and public reporting are important inputs to institutional performance. States improve on outcomes they target through rules of the game when the results are tracked, reported, and publicized.

States must create a climate that encourages partnership and collaboration—between higher education institutions and K–12 schools, and among higher education, business and industry, and state government itself—in order to foster economic development and other statewide goals.

States in which the rules of the game create systemwide initiatives that encourage joint higher education/K–12 collaboration do a better job of preparing students for postsecondary education than states in which institutions independently pursue initiatives with little or no system-level coordination.

States can create a favorable climate for economic development through initiatives that: (a) create partnerships among higher education, the private sector, and state government; (b) invest in strategic and cumulative ways for improving infrastructure; and (c) provide a structure that encourages and rewards collaboration among higher education providers within and across sectors.

Reaffirming the Role of Public Policy

The insights of the AIHEPS project, as tested and refined by our roundtable, constitute a powerful argument against the view that "market forces" in themselves will ensure that higher education institutions work effectively to fulfill a state's public objectives. In fact, what are commonly understood as market forces in higher education are not markets in the purest sense at all. As long as states continue to fund higher education institutions and subsidize students, institutions at best function in a quasi-market environment. No nonprofit university or college in the United States can be said to operate in the absence of any constraining force from state or federal policy. The environment for these institutions is most often a result of three factors: (a) a lack of clarity in the public and political arena about the public purposes that higher education should help fulfill; (b) the inability of state governments to fund their higher education institutions in the same degree as in the past, accompanied by an increase in institutional fundraising, competition for external research grants, and other entrepreneurial activity on the part of both faculty and administration; (c) a considerable amount of discretionary choice on the part of students, which heightens the competition among institutions for undergraduate student enrollments.

States have an obligation not only to fund their systems of higher education adequately, but also to provide an explicit policy framework that informs and guides the actions of individual colleges and universities.

In such an environment, higher education institutions have strong incentives to define and pursue goals having more to do with advancing their own academic prestige or fiscal well-being than with advancing public purposes that justify a state's support of higher education. For this reason, states have an obligation not only to fund their systems of higher education adequately, but also to provide an explicit policy framework that informs and guides the actions of individual colleges and universities. No state should seek to impose a strict authoritarian collar on institutions; the remarkable strengths and achievements of higher education in the United States through the past half-century have been due in considerable degree to the autonomy that colleges and universities have enjoyed. At the same time, it is incumbent on states to convey clearly the public purposes that they expect institutions to achieve, and to create the environment that makes it rational for institutions to direct their energies and resources toward the attainment of those ends.

Both New Mexico and New Jersey have allowed quasi-market forces to be a factor in the evolution of their institutions; the example of New Jersey in particular suggests that it is possible for market forces to operate in conjunction

with other factors in a state policy environment to produce results that serve the purposes of both institutions and the state. The important point is that market opportunity and institutional ambition not become the unbridled drivers of institutional growth.

Public policy comes about through a process that is often messy. Anyone experienced in the machinations of politics understands the need to guard against making the formulation of policy seem more rational than it is. To suppose, however, that the levers of policy cannot effect significant change in a state's higher education performance is an abdication of leadership and a resignation to the forces of culture and historical precedent as immutable drivers. In affirming the importance of clear and effective public policy, we underscore the need for a state's public officials to forge explicit ties between purposes, policies, and performance—not just the performance of individual institutions but of a state itself in advancing the public agenda through its system of higher education. What the *Measuring Up* report card series has provided every state is a means of gauging that performance—a context for asking the kinds of questions we have posed in this essay. If a state lacks the political will to ask the hard questions that link its educational policies to the outcomes that the system of higher education achieves, then the result can easily become a system of higher education that falls short of its potential, and in which the concepts of quality and effectiveness derive more from anecdote than from a coherent and explicit definition of performance in service of the public good.

Appendix One

The Importance of Mission Differentiation

By Stephen R. Briggs

Provost, The College of New Jersey

Though often neglected and sometimes maligned, mission differentiation is one of the critical "rules of the game" in higher education because it brings to the forefront the issue of quality as it relates both to the purposes of public education and to the scope and aspirations of specific institutions. Consider anew the five key questions from the roundtable, as viewed through the lens of mission differentiation, with an eye on the goal of quality in higher education.

1. Are public purposes clearly defined?

In this essay, it would be easy to reduce public purpose to the single goal of providing ready access to higher education regardless of economic means. But colleges and universities contribute to the public good in many other worthy ways as well. They serve as cultural, technical, and economic hothouses for the state. A vibrant and well-regarded institution helps establish the reputation of the larger community and acts as a resource magnet. Meaningful definitions of public purposes, therefore, must be multifaceted and mature as well as clear; they must recognize that the public good is significantly advanced by institutions that are highly regarded. In contrast, a one-size-fits-all approach to education precludes access to distinctiveness and value. The public is best served by an array of colleges and universities that are rich in variety and high in value.

2. Are fiscal policies and incentives aligned with public purposes?

Mission differentiation emphasizes the importance of allowing institutions to contribute distinctively to the achievement of public purposes. It implies that a state should root its support in the accomplishment of distinctive missions. Some forms of education are more costly than others—for example, medical

versus legal education, residential versus commuter campuses, and science versus liberal arts majors. Linking funding to the accomplishment of particular objectives makes sense to the extent that these objectives are mission-based and consistent with the institution's distinctive contribution to the public good. Conversely, holding all institutions accountable in a simplistic way to a single set of performance indicators hinders the creative pursuit of quality.

3. Do tuition and financial aid policies contribute to increased participation and completion?

Different kinds of institutions offer different kinds of educational experiences that vary in price. There is no reason to assume that one tuition rate is reasonable or fair across an entire system. Remedial education can be relatively expensive, just as honors-quality science and engineering instruction can be expensive. A residential campus is more expensive than a commuter campus. Thus, it is important for colleges and universities to be able to establish their own tuition and fee rates to ensure that there is sufficient funding to support the educational endeavors of the institution in light of its mission. Need-based aid is of vital importance to ensure that students have access to programs that best develop their potential. Merit-based aid is also of vital importance for building the quality of the institution and convincing the highest-achieving students to attend an institution in-state. Merit programs are not just politically expedient. Private institutions use them as a means to build the quality and reputation of the institution. To ignore or vilify the use of merit awards is to surrender top students (of all backgrounds and means) to the private institutions (which use merit programs routinely) and, essentially, to accept second-class status. In choosing tuition and financial aid policies, therefore, a state must decide not only about access but also about whether it is in the public good to aspire to have nationally ranked institutions.

4. What role does the state interface agency play in the achievement of public purposes?

Interface agencies can facilitate public purposes by crafting policies that recognize and nurture the distinctive contributions of institutions. Instead of assuming that institutional aspirations are necessarily in conflict with the public good, the interface agency should help to demonstrate that public priorities often are achieved only as a function of institutional ambition and autonomy.

The public receives substantial benefits from colleges and universities that are headed by vibrant and creative leaders who aspire to build distinguished institutions and who work in concert with other institutions to achieve state needs. Public institutions need to be attentive to the quality of undergraduate education, and interface agencies can help provide an objective assessment of whether a college is satisfying its intended purpose. As the accrediting agencies have affirmed, however, learning outcomes must be developed in the context of institutional mission, and there are no simple, uniformly applicable measures of this sort to be acquired off the shelf. In this regard, care must be taken not to confuse measures of learning outcomes with the performance indicators assessed in the *Measuring Up* report card series.

5. How does a state foster collaboration between higher education and other sectors to strengthen the infrastructure of society?

Most institutions eagerly embrace partnerships with other sectors in areas that are central to their mission. However, they are likely to resist (and not be very good at) partnerships that pull them outside of their mission. Once again, the best means to foster collaboration is to recognize and nurture the distinctive ways that institutions contribute. College and universities want to contribute to the infrastructure of society because they in turn receive from and are dependent on it.

Appendix Two

Achieving the Public Agenda for Higher Education: The Role of the State Board

By Paul E. Lingenfelter

Executive Director, State Higher Education Executive Officers

A paradox lies at the heart of this discussion of higher education and the public agenda. What legitimate institutional interests exist other than serving the public? How could a state have a public agenda that is at odds with the interests of its colleges and universities? Are not both states and institutions equally required to pursue the public agenda?

The problem, of course, lies in deciding exactly what is the public interest.

The problem, of course, lies in deciding exactly what is the public interest. In simplest terms, the role of a statewide higher education coordinating or governing board is to help states and institutions figure that out. State policymakers and institutions of higher education work in environments that have different incentives, constraints, and requirements. Quite naturally, they view the public interest from different perspectives.

While education is clearly not a "branch" of government, most states have established higher education governing or coordinating boards to provide some measure of separation between government and the operation of schools, colleges, and universities. These structures are only occasionally granted full constitutional autonomy, but they serve a clear purpose: to provide a degree of professional autonomy to educators, helping to insulate them from short-term pressures of the political process. Such professional autonomy is limited and conditional; it is granted because it is essential for building institutions that over the long haul will serve the public interest.

State governing or coordinating boards have a single focus—good public policy for higher education—and they are less likely to be distracted by responsibilities for institutional governance or the supervision of management. They provide a buffer between the political process and institutional operations; this buffer contributes to the protection of academic freedom and to the flexibility required for effective institutional management. Most importantly, these kinds of state boards have an unambiguous responsibility to articulate

and pursue the public interest and a public agenda for higher education, working with political leaders, but not as part of the partisan political process.

In specific situations, both institutions and elected officials will want the board to be on their side unambiguously. Elected officials will want a compliant board when things are tough. And institutions will want the board to be a strong advocate for their needs.

An effective board must be perceived as partially on everyone's side, but wholly on the side of the best possible outcomes for the state in the higher education arena.

An effective board must be perceived as partially on everyone's side, but wholly on the side of the best possible outcomes for the state in the higher education arena. This means that the board will challenge elected officials to do their very best on behalf of the public interest in higher education, and it will challenge institutions to do their very best on behalf of the public. Ideally, both elected officials and institutions will be willing to tolerate those challenges because the board adds expertise and good information to the process of developing policy. While it is rarely easy to do so, the board can obtain support from both elected officials and institutions by demonstrating a willingness to listen carefully to all perspectives in the process, by contributing to mutual understanding, by effectively expressing opinions based on the professional expertise of its staff and the board's independent judgment, by responding promptly and professionally to the requests of elected officials, and, at the end of the day, by implementing the decisions of duly elected public officials, whether or not they reflect perfectly the board's own views.

State coordinating or governing boards exist to assure that the conditional professional autonomy granted to colleges and universities achieves its purpose: developing and sustaining strong institutions that serve the public agenda. State boards are not infallible, and their powers are limited both by the law and by the practical limits of governing and coordinating institutions. But the importance of their role should not be underestimated. Both the effectiveness of higher education in meeting public needs and the preservation of professional autonomy depend on good state boards.

Appendix Three

The Role of the Federal Government

By David A. Longanecker

Executive Director, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

Although the federal government plays a secondary role in supporting and financing American higher education, this role remains quite substantial and clearly helps shape the enterprise. The federal government invests in higher education for two reasons. First, the federal government supports and directs two types of activities within higher education where it believes there is a primary federal responsibility: assuring access to postsecondary education and sustaining basic and applied research that is in the national interest. Second, the federal government provides support, generally more modest, in areas where there is a clear federal interest even though it is not primarily a federal responsibility. This federal involvement comes in three ways: funding, regulation of federally funded activities, and mandates to the states and institutions to pursue areas of federal interest.

Each of the 50 states has a unique mix of tuition, institutional support, and state-supported financial aid working in conjunction with federal activities.

Assuring broad student access through America's diverse higher education system is difficult for the federal government because each of the 50 states has a unique mix of tuition, institutional support, and state-supported financial aid working in conjunction with federal activities. Nonetheless, the federal effort has grown into a very substantial level of support over the last half-century, with the federal government today providing more than 75% of the total amount of student financial aid provided in America. Federal aid takes a variety of forms, including more than $50 billion in student loans, $10 billion in student grants, $7 billion in tax credits to students and their families, and $1 billion in work-study funds. Almost all of these funds are directed toward the students as consumers rather than to the institutions that provide the education.

To sustain basic and applied research, the federal government provides more than $15 billion annually to research universities throughout the country. This research support comes through many federal sources, most notably, though, through the National Science Foundation, the Institute of Medicine, the Department of Energy, and the Department of Defense. This investment in our nation's research infrastructure has secured America's preeminence internationally in the creation and transmission of new knowledge.

The Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) represents an example of the second type of federal support—in areas in which the federal government has a strong interest but not primary responsibility. Through FIPSE, a modest level of federal funding encourages innovation in higher education because improving higher education is believed to be in the federal interest. Likewise, federal support for institutions that serve minority populations helps ensure the continued presence of institutions that have an important role in higher education and might have difficulty surviving without such financial support. Often, the federal government addresses these "federal interest" areas through regulation or mandates, rather than through direct funding. For example, institutions of higher education must regularly collect and disseminate information on graduation rates, support of intercollegiate athletics and athletes, campus crime, and other areas that are deemed to be of public interest.

Blending these federal efforts with those of the 50 states, however, is a substantial challenge, and neither the states nor the federal government does a good job of addressing it. While the states are generally aware of the importance of federal programs, seldom are state policies designed to complement federal efforts. And the federal government is even less intentional in its policy efforts, seldom taking into account the ways in which changes in federal policy affect the states, either positively or negatively. Despite these difficulties, the net result is a hybrid system that is without doubt one of the most diverse, most accessible, and best systems of higher education in the world.

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The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education promotes public policies that enhance Americans' opportunities to pursue and achieve high-quality education and training beyond high school. As an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, the National Center prepares action-oriented analyses of pressing policy issues facing the states and the nation regarding opportunity and achievement in higher education—including two- and four-year, public and private, for-profit and nonprofit institutions. The National Center communicates performance results and key findings to the public, to civic, business, and higher education leaders, and to state and federal leaders who are poised to improve higher education policy.

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Purposes, Policies, Performance: Higher Education and the Fulfillment of a State's Public Agenda (February 2003, #03-1). This essay is drawn from discussions of higher education leaders and policy officials at a roundtable convened in June 2002 at New Jersey City University on the relationship between public purposes, policies, and performance of American higher education.

Measuring Up 2002: The State-by-State Report Card for Higher Education (October 2002, #02-7). This report card, which updates the inaugural edition released in 2000, grades each state on its performance in five key areas of higher education. *Measuring Up 2002* also evaluates each state's progress in relation to its own results from 2000. Visit **www.highereducation.org** to download *Measuring Up 2002* or to make your own comparisons of state performance in higher education. Printed copies are available for $25.00 by calling 888-269-3652 (discounts available for large orders).

***Technical Guide Documenting Methodology, Indicators, and Data Sources for* Measuring Up 2002** (October 2002, #02-8).

State Policy and Community College–Baccalaureate Transfer, by Jane V. Wellman August 2002, #02-6). Recommends state policies to energize and improve higher education performance regarding transfers from community colleges to four-year institutions.

Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education: The Early Years (June 2002, #02-5). The Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) attained remarkable success in funding innovative and enduring projects during its early years. This report, prepared by FIPSE's early program officers, elaborates on how those results were achieved.

Losing Ground: A National Status Report on the Affordability of American Higher Education (May 2002, #02-3). This national status report documents the declining affordability of higher education for American families, and highlights public policies that support affordable higher education. Provides state-by-state summaries as well as national findings.

The Affordability of Higher Education: A Review of Recent Survey Research, by John Immerwahr (May 2002, #02-4). This review of recent surveys by Public Agenda confirms that Americans feel that rising college prices threaten to make higher education inaccessible for many people.

Coping with Recession: Public Policy, Economic Downturns, and Higher Education, by Patrick M. Callan (February 2002, #02-2). Outlines the major policy considerations that states and institutions of higher education face during economic downturns.

Competition and Collaboration in California Higher Education, by Kathy Reeves Bracco and Patrick M. Callan (January 2002, #02-1). Argues that the structure of California's state higher education system limits the system's capacity for collaboration.

Measuring Up 2000: The State-by-State Report Card for Higher Education (November 2000, #00-3). This first-of-its-kind report card grades each state on its performance in higher education. The report card also provides comprehensive profiles of each state and brief states-at-a-glance comparisons. Visit **www.highereducation.org** to download *Measuring Up 2000* or to make your own comparisons of state performance in higher education. Printed copies are available for $25.00 by calling 888-269-3652 (discounts available for large orders).

***Beneath the Surface: A Statistical Analysis of the Major Variables Associated with State Grades in* Measuring Up 2000,** by Alisa F. Cunningham and Jane V. Wellman (November 2001, #01-4). Using statistical analysis, this report explores the "drivers" that predict overall performance in *Measuring Up 2000.*

Supplementary Analysis for* Measuring Up 2000: *An Exploratory Report, by Mario Martinez (November 2001, #01-3). Explores the relationships within and between the performance categories in *Measuring Up 2000.*

***Some Next Steps for States: A Follow-up to* Measuring Up 2000,** by Dennis Jones and Karen Paulson (June 2001, #01-2). Suggests a range of actions that states can take to bridge the gap between state performance identified in *Measuring Up 2000* and the formulation of effective policy to improve performance in higher education.

***A Review of Tests Performed on the Data in* Measuring Up 2000,** by Peter Ewell (June 2001, #01-1). Describes the statistical testing performed on the data in *Measuring Up 2000* by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems.

***Recent State Policy Initiatives in Education: A Supplement to* Measuring Up 2000,** by Aims McGuinness, Jr. (December 2000, #00-6). Highlights education initiatives that states have adopted since 1997–98.

***Assessing Student Learning Outcomes: A Supplement to* Measuring Up 2000,** by Peter Ewell and Paula Ries (December 2000, #00-5). National survey of state efforts to assess student learning outcomes in higher education.

***Technical Guide Documenting Methodology, Indicators and Data Sources for* Measuring Up 2000** (November 2000, #00-4).

A State-by-State Report Card on Higher Education: Prospectus (March 2000, #00-1). Summarizes the goals of the National Center's report card project.

Great Expectations: How the Public and Parents—White, African American and Hispanic—View Higher Education, by John Immerwahr with Tony Foleno (May 2000, #00-2). This report by Public Agenda finds that Americans overwhelmingly see higher education as essential for success. Survey results are also available for the following states:

Great Expectations: How Pennsylvanians View Higher Education (May 2000, #00-2b)
Great Expectations: How Floridians View Higher Education (August 2000, #00-2c)
Great Expectations: How Coloradans View Higher Education (August 2000, #00-2d)

Great Expectations: How Californians View Higher Education (August 2000, #00-2e)
Great Expectations: How New Yorkers View Higher Education (October 2000, #00-2f)
Great Expectations: How Illinois Residents View Higher Education (October 2000, #00-2h)

State Spending for Higher Education in the Next Decade: The Battle to Sustain Current Support, by Harold A. Hovey (July 1999, #99-3). This fiscal forecast of state and local spending patterns finds that the vast majority of states will face significant fiscal deficits over the next eight years, which will in turn lead to increased scrutiny of higher education in almost all states, and to curtailed spending for public higher education in many states.

South Dakota: Developing Policy-Driven Change in Higher Education, by Mario Martinez (June 1999, #99-2). Describes the processes for change in higher education that government, business, and higher education leaders are creating and implementing in South Dakota.

Taking Responsibility: Leaders' Expectations of Higher Education, by John Immerwahr (January 1999, #99-1). Reports the views of those most involved with decision-making about higher education, based on a survey and focus groups conducted by Public Agenda.

The Challenges and Opportunities Facing Higher Education: An Agenda for Policy Research, by Dennis Jones, Peter Ewell, and Aims McGuinness (December 1998, #98-8). Argues that due to substantial changes in the landscape of postsecondary education, new state-level policy frameworks must be developed and implemented.

Higher Education Governance: Balancing Institutional and Market Influences, by Richard C. Richardson, Jr., Kathy Reeves Bracco, Patrick M. Callan, and Joni E. Finney (November 1998, #98-7). Describes the structural relationships that affect institutional effectiveness in higher education, and argues that state policy should strive for a balance between institutional and market forces.

Federal Tuition Tax Credits and State Higher Education Policy: A Guide for State Policy Makers, by Kristin D. Conklin (December 1998, #98-6). Examines the implications of the federal income tax provisions for students and their families, and makes recommendations for state higher education policy.

The Challenges Facing California Higher Education: A Memorandum to the Next Governor of California, by David W. Breneman (September 1998, #98-5). Argues that California should develop a new Master Plan for Higher Education.

Tidal Wave II Revisited: A Review of Earlier Enrollment Projections for California Higher Education, by Gerald C. Hayward, David W. Breneman, and Leobardo F. Estrada (September 1998, #98-4). Finds that earlier forecasts of a surge in higher education enrollments were accurate.

Organizing for Learning: The View from the Governor's Office, by James B. Hunt Jr., chair of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, and former governor of North Carolina (June 1998, #98-3). An address to the American Association for Higher Education concerning opportunity in higher education.

The Price of Admission: The Growing Importance of Higher Education, by John Immerwahr (Spring 1998, #98-2). A national survey of Americans' views on higher education, conducted and reported by Public Agenda.

Concept Paper: A National Center to Address Higher Education Policy, by Patrick M. Callan (March 1998, #98-1). Describes the purposes of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education.

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